

*From the NEW YORK TRIBUNE, July 6, 1893.*

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## DOES VIVISECTION LEAD TO CRIME?

*To the Editor of the Tribune.*

SIR: What is the underlying cause of that mysterious outbreak of homicide among physicians revealed by the criminal records of 1892? When Parkman was murdered by Dr. Webster in November, 1849, it was an event so monstrous and unprecedented that for a quarter of a century it was the subject of comment. In Great Britain no English physician has been found guilty of murder for many years; Dr. Cream was a Canadian, and Dr. Lamson, who poisoned his invalid brother in 1882 for the sake of a little money, was said to be by naturalization a citizen of the United States. But look at the strange record for 1892. First, Dr. Cream, Canadian physician, executed in London, 1892, for the murder of young women. Object: amusement; the pleasure of killing. Second, Dr. Graves, American physician, found guilty of murder by poison, in Colorado, 1892. Object: money. Third, Dr. H. M. Scudder, American physician, son and grandson of eminent clergymen, charged with murder of wife's mother, in Chicago, 1892. Object: money. Escaped trial by suicide in jail. Fourth, Dr. Robert W. Buchanan, found guilty of wife poisoning, New York, 1892. Object: money. Fifth, Carlyle Harris, medical student, executed May, 1893, at the age of twenty-three, for atrocious murder of young wife by poison. Object: unknown. Putting aside hypothesis of innocence, this last instance was one of the most striking cases ever known of complete atrophy of the moral sense.

Now nature is ever a game of sequence; there is no effect without a cause. The great crimes of History may be often traced to the education of youth. It is just a century this present time since France was shaken with convulsions and drunken with blood; but behind the atrocities of '93 the student of history will see a populace watching the melted lead poured into the flesh of Damians, or the wild horses

tearing him asunder in the presence of Louis XV and his court. That utter demoralization of society which preceded the downfall of the Roman Empire was accomplished largely by making men familiar with torture. In his "History of European Morals," Mr. Lecky tells us that, "horrible as was the bloodshed of gladiatorial spectacles, these games were, perhaps, still more pernicious on account of the callousness of feeling which they diffused through all classes." Is it possible that the petrification of pity, to which educated young men must arrive before they can murder for gain those who have confided in them, has been in any way caused by their familiarity with the torture of animals without other object than the gratification of scientific curiosity?

Surely this is a serious question. To what lengths, unrestrained by law or religion, a scientific investigator sometimes permits himself to go, we may see in the work of Professor Mantegazza, entitled the "Physiology of Pain." The object of his researches and experiments was purely scientific: it had no relation to the treatment of disease; and its method was the torture of animals. One of his devices for creating extreme agony is very ancient. It was to nail the feet of the animal, as in crucifixion, so that by every movement its torture would be increased. To exasperate pain, the ingenious professor invented a machine which he called the "tormentor." With it he says, "I can take an ear, or a paw, or a piece of skin, and by turning the handle squeeze it beneath the teeth of the pincers; I can lift the animal by the suffering part; I can tear it and crush it in all sorts of ways." One experiment was on a guinea pig nursing its young; another upon a rabbit, which after being tortured two hours in the "tormentor" has "four long nails stuck in its feet," whereby the professor succeeds in "producing intense pain." Two other animals, after being tormented for two hours in the "tormentor," are "larded with long thin nails. They suffer horribly — and shut in the machine two hours more, they rush against each other, interlaced with mouths open, screaming and groaning." — (Page 107.) One creature far advanced in pregnancy was made to endure "*dolori atrocissimi*," so that it was impossible to make observations on account of its convulsions. All these experiments, extending over a year, were conducted, Professor Mantegazza tells us, "*con molto amore e pazienza moltissima*," "with great delight and extreme patience!" And what results were gained? Nothing, absolutely nothing, by which medical science has profited in the treatment of disease.

But are not such experiments impossible in this country? Not at all. *Everything is lawful; everything is possible.* Public sentiment as yet does not ask for any restrictions or limitations. "In spite of an increasing amount of vivisection practised in America, there are no indications of any restrictions being imposed," says the author of a report on "Biological Teaching in Colleges," published recently by the Washington Bureau of Education. But what must be the effect of such methods of teaching upon the minds of young men? We have the warning of medical teachers themselves.

"Watch the students at a vivisection; it is the blood and suffering, not the science, that rivets their breathless attention. If hospital experience makes students less tender of suffering, vivisection deadens their humanity and begets indifference to it," says Dr. Henry J. Bigelow, late professor of surgery in the Harvard University Medical School.

Going even beyond this in the emphasis of warning were the words of Dr. Haughton, late Medical Registrar at Trinity College, Dublin. He says:—

"I would shrink with horror from accustoming classes of young men to the sight of animals under vivisection. I believe that many of them would become cruel and hardened; . . . *and the world would have let loose upon it a set of young devils.*"

Sir, I am not an anti-vivisectionist; I do not question the utility of animal experimentation when confined to certain objects and within definite limitations. But is it not being pushed too far? By its permitted excesses—by experimentation that has no restrictions but the will of the experimenter—by the slow process of benumbing pity in the young student, may it not be tending to deteriorate one of the chief safeguards of society, the moral sensibility of the future physician? There is the astounding record of utterly heartless crime by educated men. What else is the cause of it?

CASSANDRA.

NOTE.—One week after the publication of this letter in the New York *Tribune*, Dr. Henry C. W. Meyer was arrested and brought to New York under suspicion of having made poisoning his trade for many years.

